Methodological Pluralism:
Expanding *Qualitative, Computational, & Mixed Methods*

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AOM 2025: Content & Textual Analysis in Organizational Research

QUAL STUDIES (+ MM) ARE FAR BEHIND QUANT ONES

5 MM
archetypes

FROM THE EDITORS

**PUBLISHING MULTIMETHOD RESEARCH IN AMJ:
A REVIEW AND BEST-PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Methodological triangulation for *hypothesis testing* ← { 75% }
2. Methodological triangulation for *theory development* ← { 3% }
3. "Test-explore" ← { 8% }
4. "Explore-test" ← { 8% }
5. Conducting a "full analysis" ← { 5% }

– Implicit net-effects (Fiss & Ragin 2009) ontologies (Grodal, Anteby, & Holm 2021)
– Over-reliance on single method → future research paths (Cornelissen 2023)

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FROM QUALITATIVE TO MIXED METHODS: A PROVOCATION

Qualitative methods have increased in prevalence and legitimacy

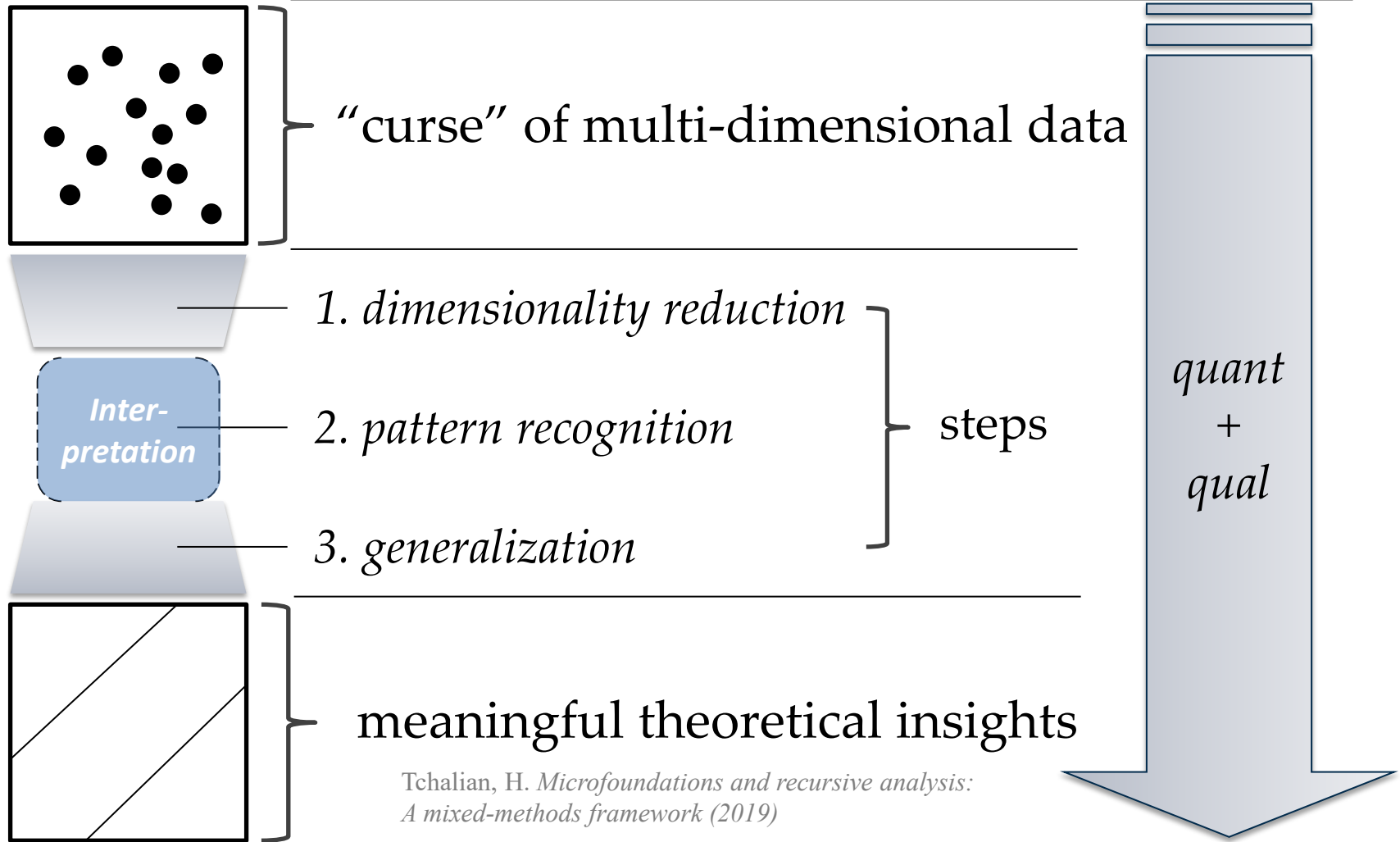*But* mixed-methods (MM) using qualitative analysis have fared less well – **why?**

1. Quantitative methods → rigor
2. Quantitative methods = net-effects models (but *not* computational, other?)
3. Mixed methods – how do we combine ("bind") different methods?

Tradeoff(?): [Analytical rigor ← → researcher flexibility] → *interpretive agency*

Interpretive Agency: Ability to make credible and *informed* knowledge claims (Cornelissen 2017) or "qualified assertions" (Cornelissen et al, 2021)

RQ: *How can MM approaches combine rigor with flexibility to achieve interpretive agency?*
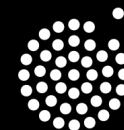
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HIGH-LEVEL PROCESS OVERVIEW

"curse" of multi-dimensional data

Inter-pretation

1. *dimensionality reduction*

2. *pattern recognition*   steps

3. *generalization*

quant + qual

meaningful theoretical insights

Tchalian, H. *Microfoundations and recursive analysis: A mixed-methods framework (2019)*

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CHARLES TILLY (2004) ON METHODOLOGICAL RIGOR

✓ Both qualitative and quantitative analyses properly carried out in social science are structured "formalisms," or "an explicit representation of a set of elements and of relations among them" (596).

✓ … the "enticing comparison" between quantitative analysis and formal rigor "leads easily to a false conclusion" (595) – i.e., existing work undergirded by ontologies inadvertently prioritizing quantitative analysis.

✓ Tilly argued about his (other) discipline, history, that it "joins with social science when its organizing arguments become explicit, falsifiable, and theoretically informed" (598) – which I argue about qual analysis and MM.

✓ **Model**: identifying *alignment + priority* of methods *bound* together in MM

Tilly, C. 2004. Observations of Social Processes and Their Formal Representations. *Sociological Theory*, 22(4): 595–602

FIGURE 3
Correspondence Map: Framings and Issue Markers
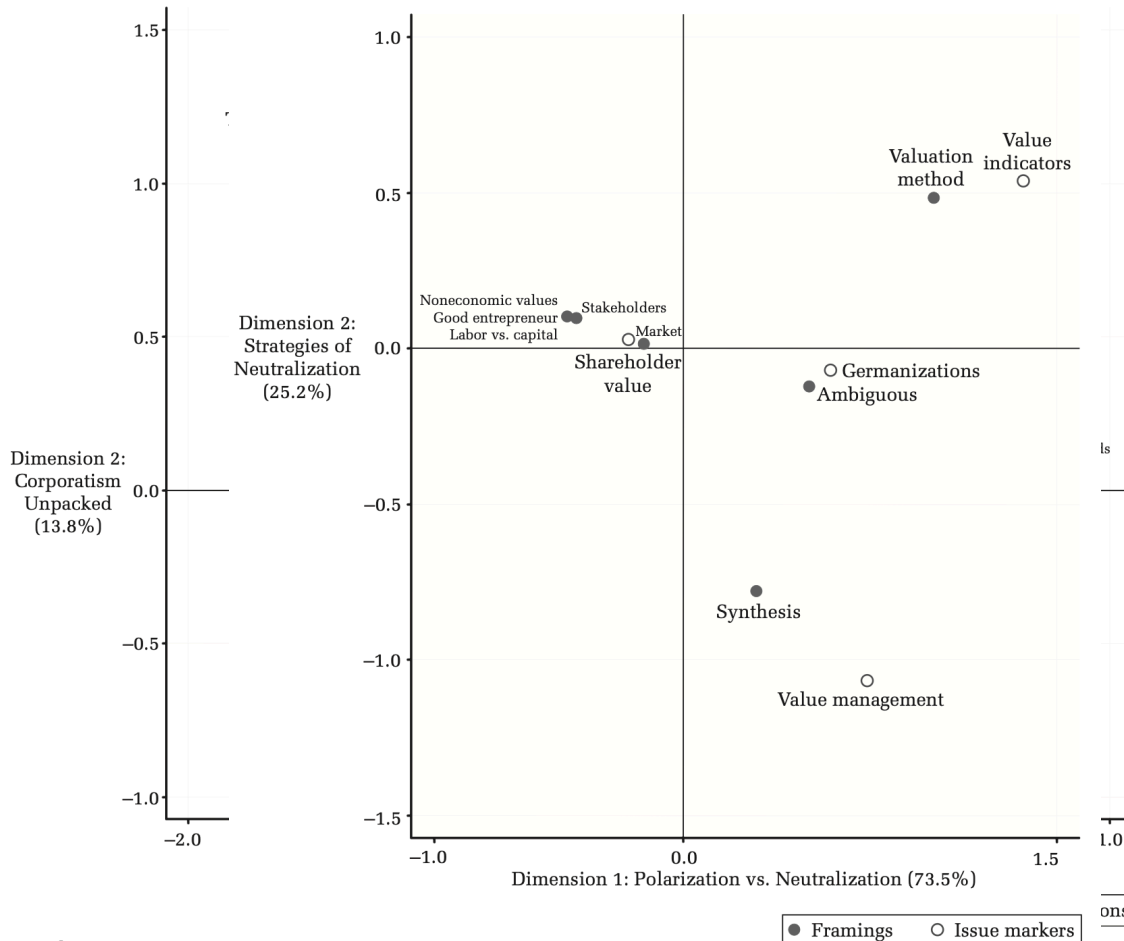
equal **priority across methods**
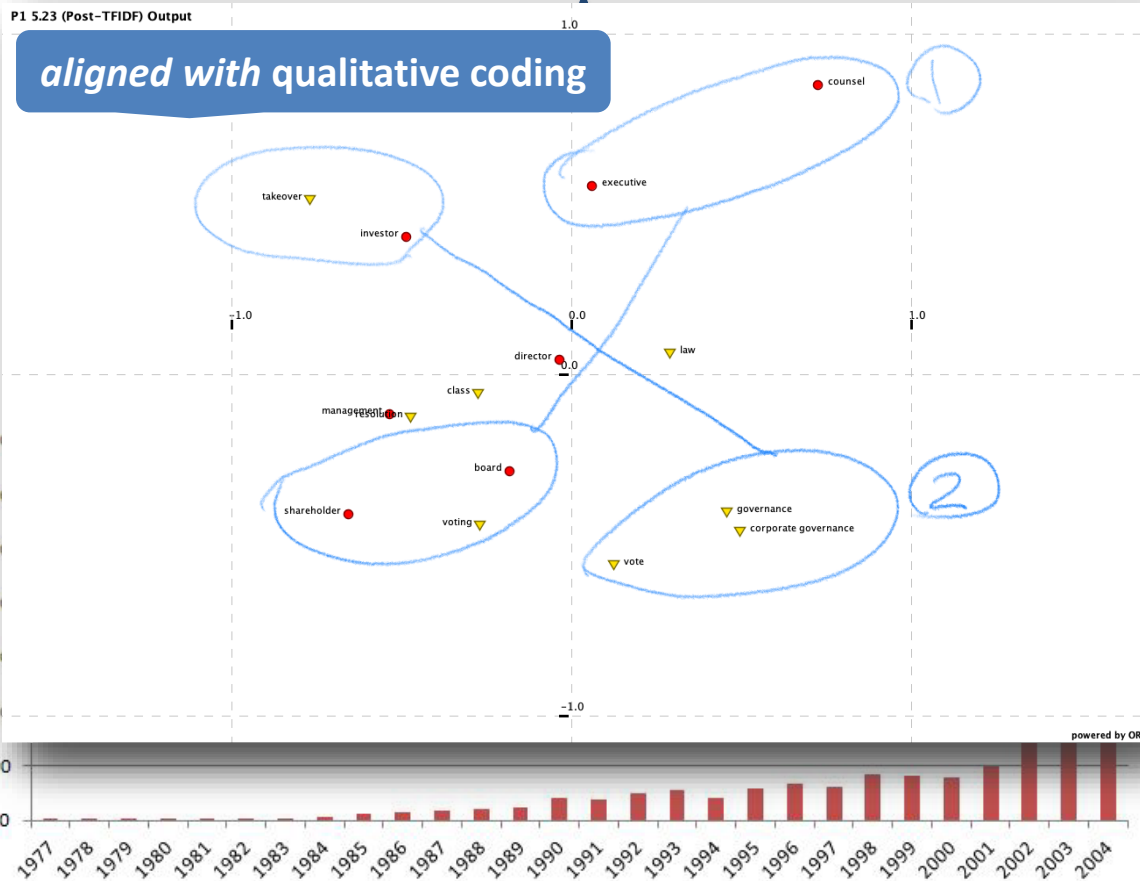
constraints

alignment

flexibility

H
M
L

social + market *actions,*
social + market *measures:*
bi-modal **matrix → CA (~Meyer & Hollerer)**

equal **priority across methods**

aligned with **qualitative coding**

P1 5.23 (Post–TFIDF) Output

constraints

alignment

flexibility

H

M

L

Content Analysis: Methodological Challenges Abound

- Aiming for *middle-range* theory to "guide inquiry" (Merton 1949)
  - ✓ M. lamented mid-century's "many approaches but few arrivals"
  - ✓ Our *novel tools* and *methodological pluralism* call for MM
- We can't escape methodological *choices*:
  1. **Empirical Data**: *data* + *levels* to analyze, induce
     - ✓ Corpus construction (*small* N → *large* N → *very large* N?)
  2. **Analytical Methods**: *linguistic* + *computational* tools to use, adapt
     - ✓ Ontological assumptions (*interpretive* → "gray-box" → LLM)
  3. **Interpretive Agency**: *rigor* + *flexibility* to expand problem space
     - ✓ Beyond 75% of common methods (test → + explore)
- Choices create challenges BUT expand *analytical opportunities*

THANK YOU!